

Message Text

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14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1478

INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, MX

SUBJ: NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE CAPTIONED "MEXICO PUTS TROOPS ON
PATROL TO ENSURE SAFETY OF TOURISTS"

REF: STATE 178260

A NUMBER OF ROBBERIES AND ATTACKS ON AMERICAN TOURISTS BY ARMED BANDITS IN THE ENSENADA, BAJA CALIFORNIA BEACH AREAS HAVE BEEN REPORTED IN RECENT MONTHS, AND GIVEN WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY IN BOTH LOCAL AND NEARBY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NEWS MEDIA. THE INCIDENTS USUALLY TAKE PLACE AT NIGHT IN ISOLATED BEACH AREAS. THE MOST PUBLICIZED INCIDENT TOOK PLACE AT PUNTA BANDA, 20 MILES SOUTH OF ENSENADA, ON MAY 29, WHEN BANDITS RAIDED GROUPS OF AMERICAN CAMPERS, INCLUDING A BUSLOAD OF ILLINOIS STUDENTS, AT 2:00 A.M., ROBBING AND TERRORIZING THEM. ENSENADA JUDICIAL POLICE HAVE FURNISHED CONGEN A LIST OF SEVEN OTHER SUCH INCIDENTS TAKING PLACE IN BEACH AREAS OVER ONE MONTH PERIOD FROM MAY 29 TO JUNE 26. NO INCIDENTS REPORTED DURING JULY 4 WEEKEND. AUTHORITIES POINT OUT THERE HAVE BEEN LESS THAN A DOZEN INCIDENTS OF ROBBERY AND VIOLENCE IN RECENT MONTHS AMONG THE MANY THOUSANDS OF TOURISTS WHO HAVE VISITED CAMPING GROUNDS IN THIS AREA, BUT STATE THAT THE NEGATIVE PUBLICITY HAS CAUSED DROP IN TOURISM IN ENSENADA AREA. THEY ESTIMATE TWO MILLION TOURISTS VISIT ENSENADA AREA ANNUALLY. CONCERNED MEXICAN FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS HELD SERIES

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OF MEETINGS IN ENSENADA LAST WEEK TO FORMULATE SECURITY MEASURES

TO PROTECT CAMPERS. STEPS WERE TAKEN TO INCREASE POLICE SECURITY AND COOPERATION AT ALL LEVELS, AND MEXICAN ARMY MOTORIZED PATROLS WERE ASSIGNED TO PATROL 10 MILE BEACH AREA FROM FRIDAY THROUGH SUNDAY FROM 5:00 P.M. TO 5:00 A.M. AUTHORITIES STATE ALL POSSIBLE MEANS WILL BE TAKEN TO HALT BANDITRY AND MAKE BEACHES SAFE FOR TOURISTS, AND INDICATE MEASURES INITIATED IN ENSENADA MAY BE EXTENDED TO OTHER AREAS OF BAJA CALIFORNIA PENINSULA WITH ARMY UNITS STATIONED AT SAN QUINTIN, PUNTA PRIETA, AND EL ARCO BEING USED TO PATROL BEACH AREAS AND TRANSPENINSULA HIGHWAY. TOURISTY #;3 ?33, :-7589,3\$ 59 -;98\$:-08,& -5 ,8 8, 8 9)-53\$, UNPAOIOLED AREAS. CONGEN BELIEVES SITUATION HAS BEEN EXAGGERATED AND OVER-PUBLICIZED BY MEDIA, AND THERE IS NO REASON FOR CONCERN FOR SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF TOURISTS AND RESIDENTS IN THE ENSENADA AREA. THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN THE LAW-AND-ORDER SITUATION IN THE OTHER AREAS OF THE CONSULAR DISTRICT.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION EMBASSY: THERAHHAVE BEEN NO NOTE-WORTHY REPORTS OF HARRASSVC T OR EXTORTIO CZOF AMERICANS BY MEXICAN OFFICIALS, OTHER THAN USUAL COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FROM TIME TO TIME. TIENKEN

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